

# Commissioner's UPDATE

News from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection

March — April 2003



## A Message from Bradley M. Campbell, Commissioner

With his State of the State speech earlier this year, Governor McGreevey laid out an aggressive agenda to fight sprawling development and congestion, accelerate open space preservation and protect our state's natural resources. At DEP, one of the major initiatives we've undertaken to implement the Governor's vision is the development of a Blueprint for Intelligent Growth (BIG) Map.

The goal is to provide a clearer understanding of the areas in the state that are appropriate or inappropriate for development. It will serve as a guide for state investment and assist local officials to plan construction projects more efficiently. It will also help DEP staff better manage our resources as we review projects and permit applications.

The BIG Map is a work in progress. Its success will require intensive consultation with the many stakeholders who will be affected by the map. In the end, we hope to produce a unified vision of how New Jersey should grow in the future. Combined with our work to protect our water resources, spur brownfield redevelopment and expand access to parks, the BIG Map can help us plan for a healthy New Jersey economy while preserving the quality of life we have come to enjoy and expect.

*Bradley M. Campbell*

## DEP Unveils Blueprint for Intelligent Growth (BIG) Map, Seeks Public Comment

To achieve smart growth and to improve the quality of life for all New Jersey residents, DEP has launched a new, map-based initiative. It is called the Blueprint for Intelligent Growth (BIG) Map, also referred to as the DEP map.

A major goal of the DEP map is to make the state's environmental regulations transparent to developers and municipalities so they will fully understand their obligations and legal limitations prior to proposing new development projects. It will show where the department, through streamlined regulatory approaches, will encourage growth, new development and redevelopment, and where it will discourage inappropriate growth to protect the state's waters and natural resources.

Strengthening the protection of water quality and water quantity is a key objective of the DEP's map. Better stewardship of our precious water resources is critical to ensure that there are safe and reliable water supplies in the future for our growing communities. This will require increased protections of our high-quality waters.

The DEP map was first unveiled as a concept on Jan. 16. A revised version, based on additional data, was posted on the department's web site on March 3. The site includes downloadable and searchable versions of the map. It also provides information about how the map was developed, initiatives to develop regulations to support the map, the relationship of the DEP map to the State Plan map, and information on proposals to ensure clean and plentiful water for New Jersey's residents and businesses. You can visit the department's anti-sprawl web page at [www.nj.gov/dep](http://www.nj.gov/dep).

*continued on page 2*



*Governor McGreevey accepts a token of thanks from Bill Sheehan, the Hackensack Riverkeeper, at the announcement of new CI proposals in Bergen County. Looking on (left to right) are Doug O'Malley, NJPIRG, and Mayor George Paschalis, River Vale Township. (story on page 3)*

## BIG Map...

DEP created the BIG Map by overlaying various sets of data available to the state that detailed existing environmental and planning information. In addition to the state's critical water resources, the map incorporates data on significant habitats for threatened and endangered species, existing infrastructure such as roads and sewers and land that has already been preserved. Prime farmlands, areas designated as Urban Enterprise Zones and state planning designations were also considered in crafting the map.

After the data was consolidated into one visual representation of the state's land mass, areas were color-coded to reflect their suitability for development. Land viewed as suitable was color-coded green, yellow was assigned to areas where DEP felt development proposals should be cautiously reviewed and red was used for areas that were deemed deserving of strong protection from development.

The map has been undergoing continual revision since first proposed in January. The second version of the map reflects additional data sets that were incorporated after the first draft was presented to the public. Future revisions are anticipated to correct any inaccuracies in the data and to incorporate additional information gained from consultations with local and county representatives.

The department is committed to a robust, public process to ensure that all interested parties are heard throughout both an informal and formal comment period. The public is invited and

**"There is no single greater threat to our way of life in New Jersey than the unrestrained, uncontrolled development that has jeopardized our water supplies, made our schools more crowded, our roads congested and our open space disappear."**

**— Governor James E. McGreevey  
State of the State Address 2003**

encouraged to give comments and input, either in writing or electronically, by visiting the DEP web site.

The map will also undergo intensive review with local officials. Cabinet members involved in the map's development recently sent a letter to each of the state's mayors, co-signed by the President of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, in which they outlined the process for local input into the map's development. As they wrote in the letter, "While this is a lengthy and involved process of review and consultation, both the League and the McGreevey Administration are committed to ensuring that the views of municipalities are heard and considered. Each of us stands ready to work with you individually as we empower municipalities to protect the quality of life in New Jersey's communities." The full text of the letter is available on DEP's anti-sprawl web page.

Following these consultations, the department will formally propose the map for adoption. At the same time, DEP will propose revisions to existing departmental regulations to align them with the smart growth categories designated in the map. All of these proposals will then undergo another period of public comment.

The BIG Map has the potential to positively reshape the development trends that have been changing the state's character in recent years and affecting the quality of life for all of us. I encourage you to learn more about it and to share with us your ideas and concerns as we seek to build a better New Jersey.



*DEP Commissioner Campbell unveils the first version of the BIG Map at a news conference in the State House.*

## Governor Announces New Category One Nominations

Continuing his commitment to protect the quality of the state's drinking water supplies and key natural resources stressed by the demands of overdevelopment and sprawl, Governor McGreevey has proposed additional Bergen County water bodies for the highest level of water quality protection.

During an event in River Vale, Bergen County, the Governor proposed Category One (C1) status for Lake Tappan and Woodcliff Lake, as well as areas of the other water bodies that drain into the Oradell Reservoir—a source of drinking water for more than 750,000 residents.

Since his 2002 Earth Day pledge, Governor McGreevey has proposed 24 bodies of water for C1 status, a scientific designation that provides the highest level of protection for waterways from any activities that produce a measurable change in the existing quality of the water.

The DEP will work with the 22 municipalities located in the 72,000 acres that comprise the Oradell Reservoir's natural drainage area to identify the exact locations for C1 designation.

C1 designations occur through an administrative rulemaking process, affording the public an opportunity to provide comment and input on these decisions.

## Species of the Month



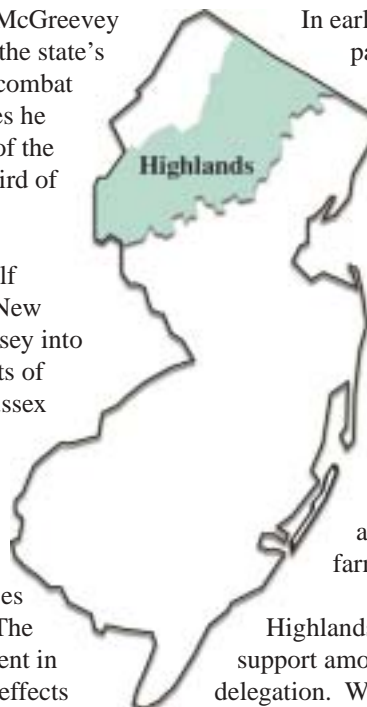
*Each month in 2003, DEP's web site is showcasing a Species of the Month to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the state's Endangered Species Conservation Act. April highlights the osprey.*

## Preserving New Jersey's Highlands

In his recent State of the State address, Governor McGreevey spoke of his unwavering commitment to preserve the state's critical open space as part of a statewide effort to combat sprawl and overdevelopment. Among the priorities he identified was preserving the New Jersey section of the Highlands, a national treasure that supplies one-third of the state's drinking water.

The Highlands region contains about one and a half million acres and runs from Connecticut through New York's Hudson River valley and northern New Jersey into Pennsylvania. The New Jersey section covers parts of Bergen, Hunterdon, Morris, Passaic, Somerset, Sussex and Warren counties and includes the vast watersheds of Newark and Jersey City.

A recent report from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service stated that the Highlands region faces a "fragile future" as it loses more than 5,000 acres annually to deforestation. The report also stated that projected rates of development in the Highlands would have significant detrimental effects on the high-quality water this area provides.



In early March, the Governor unveiled a legislative package to follow through on his State of the State commitment to accelerate open space acquisition in the Highlands. One of his proposed bills would raise the bonding capacity for the Garden State Preservation Trust, which would increase by at least \$100 million the amount of money available for open space preservation over the next three years. The Governor has proposed that half of these additional funds be dedicated to land acquisition in the New Jersey Highlands. He also proposed legislation to provide for a limited-time capital gains tax waiver for landowners who sell their property to the state's open space program and more generous income averaging provisions for farmers to encourage farmland preservation.

Highlands preservation has overwhelming bipartisan support among New Jersey's legislative and congressional delegation. Working together, we can preserve this invaluable natural resource for generations.



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## DEP Announces Improved Speakers Program

**T**he Internet has become an invaluable tool for sharing information with the public. But a web site is no substitute for dialogue with a person, particularly when communicating complex scientific concepts such as those that underlie many of DEP's programs and regulations. Recognizing the importance of person-to-person public contact, the department has enhanced its program to provide speakers to community groups and civic organizations throughout the state.

The Speakers Program is designed for general audiences interested in an overview of the department's work or a more in-depth discussion of specific issues that have generated broad-based public interest. Presentations help explain environmental laws and how DEP's programs are designed to protect public health and the state's natural resources. They complement the public hearings and outreach activity program offices undertake for the many stakeholders directly affected by the department's regulations.

DEP is continually expanding and updating its web site to provide public access to our data. But if it's a speaker you need, feel free to contact us. Additional information about the Speakers Program can be found at [www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/speak](http://www.nj.gov/dep/seeds/speak) or you can call 609-292-1474.

**Enjoy the outdoors this  
Spring and Summer. Get DEP's free Events  
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**For more information  
call (800) 843-6420 or e-mail:  
[Michelle.Stelle@dep.state.nj.us](mailto:Michelle.Stelle@dep.state.nj.us)**

## New Health Advisories for Fish

**W**orking in partnership with state health officials, DEP recently issued new advisories that outline safe eating practices and warnings for 13 species of fish with elevated levels of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

The new advisories let individuals make an informed choice about the amount of fish to consume in their diet in light of potential health risks associated with PCBs, a probable human carcinogen. The advisories are more stringent for high-risk individuals, including infants, children, pregnant women, nursing mothers and women of childbearing age, who are more sensitive to the harmful effects of PCBs.

Statewide consumption advisories have been established for American eel, bluefish and striped bass. Additional location-specific advisories have been revised for blue crab, white perch, white catfish, channel catfish, common carp, largemouth bass, pumpkinseed sunfish, brown bullhead, bluegill sunfish and redbreast sunfish.

While the manufacturing of PCBs was banned in 1970, DEP continues efforts to reduce or eliminate human exposure to PCBs that remain in the environment.

Copies of the new advisories are available on the DEP web site at: [www.nj.gov/dep/dsr/njmainfish.htm](http://www.nj.gov/dep/dsr/njmainfish.htm). In addition to following fish consumption guidelines, individuals can significantly reduce their exposure to PCBs by properly cleaning and cooking fish. Preparation and cooking recommendations are also available on the DEP web site.

